

Amendment to the Specification

Please amend the following paragraphs:

Page 1, lines 1-11

This application is a ~~Continuation~~ continuation of copending application no 09/551,766 filed on April 18, 2000, which is a continuation of application no. 09/162,874, filed September 29, 1998, now US patent no. 6,105,014, which is a continuation of application no. 08/845,012, 08/845,012, filed ~~4/22/97~~ April 22, 1997, now U.S. Pat. No. 5,831,220, which was a division of Serial. No. 08/235,290, filed ~~4/29/94~~ April 29, 1994, now U.S. Pat. No. 5,656,799, which was a Continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial. No. 07/903,342, filed June 24, 1992, now U.S. Patent No. 5,340,948, which is a Continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial. No. 07/683,243, filed April 10, 1991, now U.S. Patent. No. 5,233,532. The disclosures of the above-identified documents are hereby incorporated by reference as if set forth fully herein.

Page 34, lines 15-34

As in the previous embodiments, system 310 of the third embodiment is deployed to a location which is considered convenient to potential customers. Once the system 310 is positioned, the microprocessor 382 is programmed to interface with potential customers by providing the necessary programming input via the program input device 108. In a preferred embodiment, the programming software is written in an event driven language such as LabVIEW®. software, available from National Instruments Corp. Such event driven software provides a graphical data flow which facilitates the design and troubleshooting of the software. Typically, the loaded information includes the appropriate zone and weight charges for all client delivery services as well as the delivery services available from the licensed commercial delivery service providers. The programmer also loads the corresponding fee files which correspond to

PATENT
Attorney Docket No. 331235-00021

each client delivery service available at that location. Once all such information has been loaded into microprocessor 382, system 310 is ready to interact with potential customers.

Page 38, line 21 to Page 39, line 8

Once all of the shipping information has been properly entered, the delivery date and cost for each delivery service available to the customer is computed at step 526. In computing the delivery date, the software takes into account weekends, holidays and other days in which no delivery service is available when calculating for each service when the package can be expected to be delivered. The cost for each available delivery service is also calculated using the weight and dimensioning information as well as the destination data. The delivery date and cost for all available service options are then displayed to the customer on the CRT 322. This allows the customer to make an informed judgment regarding which delivery service is desired on the basis of cost and projected delivery date. The customer may also be given an opportunity to select weekend delivery, as available. The customer then selects the desired service option at 528. For example, the customer may select second day air for Saturday delivery. All data regarding the customer's selection is then displayed to the customer on CRT 322 so that the customer can determine at step 530 whether all of the proper information has been provided. If so, the label is printed at step 534. If not, the customer is given an opportunity at step ~~562~~532 to edit this information before the label is printed at step 534.

Page 40, line 25 to Page 41, line 9

Upon activation of the conveyor belt 340, the inner door motor 248 is also activated at step 546 to open the inner door to the storage area. However, if an overcurrent is detected at step 548 indicating that the storage area is full, an error message is sent to the customer at step 550 and an appropriate message sent to service personnel. If no overcurrent is detected at step 548,

sensors 356, 358 and 360 detect movement of the package or envelope 378 through the inner door 336 until it is detected at step 552 that the package has passed through the inner door 336. However, if the parcel 378 does not pass through the inner door 336 within a predetermined amount of time, or if an overcurrent signal is received from the inner door motor 248 indicating that the inner door 336 is jammed for some reason, an error message is sent to the customer at step 554 and the transaction is aborted. As shown in FIG. 18B, in the event of such a failure, the appropriate message is sent to service personnel, and the customer will be issued a receipt indicating that the package has been accepted so that the customer may then terminate his or her transaction. Once the parcel 378 passes through the inner door 336, as detected in step 352, the conveyor belt 340 is then reset at step 556 for the next package.

Page 45, lines 21-26

Embodiment of Figures 20-22, 21, 22A-22C

Figures. 20-22, 21, 22A-22C illustrate a stand alone automated shipping system 700 constructed in accordance with a fourth embodiment of the invention for generating an appropriate mailing label for application to a parcel, package or envelope for shipment via a commercial carrier.

Page 47, lines 17-27

Figure 21 illustrates a control system for the embodiment of Figure 20. As in the previous embodiments, the control system illustrated in Figure 21 coordinates the various sensors and input/output devices of the system. As schematically illustrated in Figure 21, the control system includes a microprocessor 718 which receives inputs from the various components of the system 700 and provides the appropriate control outputs. Operation of the system 700 is preferably

controlled by software implemented by microprocessor 718 as will be described in more detail below with respect to ~~Figure 22~~ Figures 22A, 22B and 22C.

Page 48, line 28 to Page 49, line 9

As noted above, system 700 is preferably deployed in a retail establishment such a grocery or hardware store. Once the system 700 is in place, the microprocessor 718 is programmed to interface with potential customers by providing the necessary programming input via the program input device 108. As in the third embodiment, the programming software is preferably written in an event driven language such as LabVIEW.® software, available from National Instruments Corp. Such event driven software provides a graphical data flow which facilitates the design and troubleshooting of the software. Typically, the loaded information includes the appropriate zone and weight charges for all client delivery services as well as the delivery services available from the licensed commercial delivery service providers. The programmer also loads the corresponding fee files which correspond to each client delivery service available at that location. Once all such information has been loaded in the microprocessor 718, system 700 is ready to interact with potential customers.

Page 49, line 23 to Page 50, line 5

As shown in FIG. 22(A), upon initialization of the system 700 at step 800, the customer is given an option to see and hear a video demonstration illustrating the operation of the system 700. If the customer provides input at step 802 by touching a "demonstration" button 701 (FIG. 20) displayed on CRT 702, a 7-10 screen demonstration is displayed at step 804 which is accompanied by screen graphics and voice. The customer may cancel the demonstration at any time by touching a "cancel" button on CRT 702.

To begin the shipping process, the customer touches a "start shipping process" button displayed on CRT 702. Once the system detects the user input in step 506, the ~~The~~ customer is then directed to provide the necessary payment and identification information at step 806. Help in operating the system 700 may be obtained at any time by touching a "help" button displayed on CRT 702. As with the previous embodiments, the shipping process also may be cancelled at any time up to the point where the shipment label is verified. The shipping process is cancelled by touching a "quit" button displayed on CRT 702.

Page 50, lines 6-15

Different types of credit or debit cards as well as cash are suitable for payment at step 806. Typically, bank credit cards and vendor issued debit or credit cards are used. At step 808, system 700 checks to see if the card is valid and not recorded in a "bad" card file. If the system detects in step 808 that the card data is invalid, the system loops back to step 806 and waits for more credit card data. However, if cash is selected for payment, this is recorded by the system 700 and is indicated on the label. The cash is then collected by the cashier at the time of depositing the package at the appropriate counter or other designated deposit area.

Page 51, line 31 to page 52, line 14

Once all of the shipping information has been properly entered, microprocessor 718 then polls scale 706 at step 826 to determine the weight of the parcel or envelope 708. If no weight or an invalid weight is detected at step 828, system 700 prompts the customer at step 830 to place the parcel or envelope 708 on the scale 706. If no weight is detected for a period of time (usually around 30 seconds), system 700 will assume the customer has left and will abort this shipping transaction.

Next, at step 832, system 700 prompts the customer to input the dimensions of the parcel

or envelope 708 to be shipped. The customer determines the measurements using measuring grid 710 adjacent scale 706. Screen graphics on CRT 702 help the customer in this process by illustrating how the dimensions of the package are to be measured using the measuring grid 710. System 700 then determines at step 834 whether the input dimension data is valid and issues an appropriate message at step 836 if the dimensions are, for example, too large to be handled at that location. The customer is then given another opportunity to enter the dimensions at step 832 to correct any errors.

Page 52, line 26 to Page 53, line 10

CRT 702 next displays a shipping label at step 842. The customer is given an opportunity at step 844 to check its accuracy and to edit it as required at step 846. If the zip code is edited at step 846, system 700 goes back and recalculates the shipping charges and gives the customer another opportunity to select the service options at step 840. This is necessary because the shipping charges will probably be different when the shipping address is changed. Also, the customer may be given another chance to select data in the consignee file. Data in the consignee file also will be updated to reflect any address changes. Any other changes may be made without requiring recalculations and system 700 may continue processing the shipment. As in the previous embodiment, tracking information such as bar code labels and the like may also be applied to the label if they are of use to the carrier.

The label is then printed at step 848 if the label data is determined to be valid in step 844. A screen and voice prompt will instruct the customer to apply the label to the parcel or envelope as illustrated on CRT 702. The label preferably has a backing that may be peeled off by the customer so that the label may be readily stuck to the parcel or envelope 708.